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Medieval Synagogues in the Mediterranean Region

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Medieval Synagogues of the Mediterranean Region[1]

Samuel D. Gruber

Introduction

This paper focuses on evidence from parts of the Mediterranean region, especially from Southern Europe. Until the fifteenth century, hundreds of Jewish communities populated the Iberian and Italian peninsulas, and there were Jewish communities throughout the Balkans. These places had synagogues, and many had more than one. While relatively little physical evidence of these buildings is known, we can reconstruct some of their appearance and some aspects of their use and significance. But I want to begin with a story, one that has bearing on this lost synagogue history; but one that to me seems appropriate to begin this exciting conference.

In his 2004 book *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth Century Spain*, Mark Meyerson describes a resurgence of Jewish life, and interest in Jewish culture, in the Spanish Valencian town of Morvedre (now known as Sagunto). One of the remarkable stories he tells is of the frequent visits in the fifteenth century to the old synagogue by *Conversos* – those Jews or their descendants who now were practicing Christians. Inquisition testimony regarding these *Conversos* reports that

> they all went to the synagogue, but they found that it was locked. The said Jew, Jacob, went to look for the Jew who had the key to the synagogue, and he returned with him and they opened the synagogue. The Jew who had the synagogue key was a little, old man … and he showed all the aforesaid [*Conversos*] the synagogue … and they looked at the pool which they had covered with some planks. They opened a cabinet where the Torah was kept, the said old Jew took the Torah in his hands, and it seemed to the witness that he raised it above the heads of the aforesaid, of whom some were kneeling and others were still on their feet.[2]

For those of us who have spent many years in search of old synagogues this story is particularly poignant. When I read it, I felt it especially so, since the date of the inquisition trial of these *Conversos* was exactly five hundred years before my own first such research trip in Central Europe, undertaken in 1989 for the World Monuments Fund. Many of our conference participants – whether they have traveled on seminars of exploration with the Center for Jewish Art, or whether they have, on their own, searched out Mr. Meyer Spira in Bardejov, Mr. Lajos Lowy in Tokai or a score of other conscientious custodians of Jewish heritage across Europe, will relate to this passage.[3]

Of course today, we who visit, research, and preserve historic synagogues do not fear the Inquisition, but there are some colleagues here today who began their careers during Communism, and they were persecuted for their work.

But the story of Morvedre tells us more than simply that what we do is not entirely new in the Jewish world, even if today's emphasis on architecture is. We also learn of the existence – on the eve of the final expulsion of Jews from Spain – of an otherwise unknown medieval synagogue, and something of its spatial layout. This story is a signpost that points to the many unknown synagogues that filled the towns of Spain and much of the Mediterranean region before the modern era. The tantalizing Morvedre description is a hint that there was once so much more. Perhaps the synagogue of Morvedre was like a fifteenth-century church in Hijar, near Zaragoza in Aragon, also in Valencia, that is purported to have been a synagogue, though no hard evidence yet exists to make this link.[4]

A more satisfying fifteenth-century description of a synagogue is an account by Obadiah da Bertinoro, who visited the magnificent synagogue in Palermo, Sicily, on his way to *Erez Israel*, only one year before our *Conversos* in Morvedre were tried by the Inquisition. It better illustrates the richness of what was lost:

> The Synagogue at Palermo has not its equal in the whole world; the stone pillars on the outer courtyard are encircled by vines such as I have never before seen. I measured one of them and it was of the thickness of five spans. From the court you descend by stone steps into another which belongs to the vestibule of the Synagogue. This vestibule has three sides and a porch in which there are large chairs for any who may not wish to enter the Synagogue, and a splendid fountain. The entrance is placed at the fourth side of the Synagogue which is built in the form of a square, 40 cubits long and 40 cubits wide. On the eastern side there is a stone building, shaped like a dome, the Ark. It contains the rolls of the law which are ornamented with crowns and pomegranates of silver and precious stones to the value of 4,000 gold pieces (according to the statement of the Jews who live there) and are laid on a wooden shelf, and not put into a chest as with us. The Ark has two doors, one towards the south, and one towards the north, and the office of opening and shutting the doors is entrusted to two of the congregation. In the center of the Synagogue is a wooden platform, the Teva, where the readers recite their prayers. The Synagogue is surrounded by numerous buildings, such as the hospital, where beds are provided for sick people.[5]

Much of this volume focuses on the recovery of memory, and the renewal of ruins of the great synagogue civilization that filled Europe in the century and a half before the Holocaust. This paper is intended to serve as a reminder of the synagogue civilization that existed but was lost centuries earlier.

Throughout the European Middle Ages, the synagogue developed as the central identifying institution and physical building for Jews, replacing the still yearned-for but increasingly distant Jerusalem Temple as the focus of Jewish identity. Equally important, the synagogue became the symbol *par excellence* of the Jews and their community for European Christian majority populations in the countries where Jews were settled. For Christians, the synagogue was a Jewish church; but much more so, it came to symbolize the opposite of all that the church represented.

Medieval synagogues, however, were hardly symbolic abstractions to the Jewish men and women of the Middle Ages. They were at the very center of their religious, social and political lives. So much so, in fact, that they may have been taken for granted; they were often mentioned in documents of every imaginable sort, but they are rarely described. We must remember that the synagogue was not only – and not primarily – a building. It was an institution, a process, a *locus* and a religious obligation.

Unlike the prominent synagogues built in parts of Europe beginning in the late seventeenth century, circumstances mostly required that Mediterranean synagogues be built to serve and to speak only to the community of Jews – and to avoid as much as possible any overt presentation – that could lead to confrontation – with non-Jews. As a rule most synagogues were smaller than most churches, and they were much less visible to the casual eye. Still, size and ostentation often violated established social norms and even legal requirements, but even when that was not the case, they could lead to confrontation and confiscation, as in the case of the fourteenth-century Samuel Ha-Levi Abulafia Synagogue of Toledo.[6]

The medieval synagogues once common across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa are now, of course, sparsely preserved, and in most localities they are entirely forgotten.[7] In the past two decades, however, much more evidence has become available to enhance our knowledge and understanding of medieval synagogues.[8] In addition to long-studied manuscript illuminations,[9] this new information is archaeological,[10] and even more so derives from the close study of documentary evidence – in Hebrew and local languages – by historians such as Yom-Tov Assis and Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, in Spain and Ariel Toaff in Italy, to whose work I am indebted.[11]

All this information, often collected in the course of other research, can be assembled to present a fairly detailed picture of synagogue architecture, decoration, and use in some places for some periods of the Middle Ages – the period prior to the Expulsions from Iberia and the creation of Italian ghettoes. We now know the general and specific distribution of medieval

Jewish settlements in Southern Europe and we know or can surmise where many synagogues must have been. But except for a few buildings that still stand, such as the synagogues in Toledo and Córdoba, these medieval synagogues receive little attention other than from a few dedicated scholars, except when their long-buried remains are uncovered.

Until recently, such discoveries were mostly accidental, but a new generation of researchers is now seeking out remains of Jewish settlement to reveal a hidden past. For the past two years I've been involved with Project Yesod of the Ename Center for Cultural Heritage in Belgium, in an effort to track and monitor excavations of Jewish cultural sites in Europe and to develop an early warning system to alert cultural heritage authorities and Jewish communities about where Jewish cultural remains may be.[12] The Project Yesod volunteer committee has found more recent or ongoing excavations than any of us had imagined when we first pooled our knowledge and drew up lists. Some of these excavations are in Germany, like the recent work in Regensburg,[13] and the ongoing exciting archaeology of the Early Medieval – and possibly ancient – synagogue of Cologne. There have also been several excavations along the Mediterranean littoral – from Saranda, Albania, to Maribor, Slovenia; to Bova Marina, Calabria; to Siracusa (Syracuse), Sicily. But the largest number by far is in Spain, where recent work includes excavations in Barcelona, Besalu, Burgos, Lorca, Molina de Aragon, and, of course, Toledo.[14] We still await the significance of many of these excavations, but we can be certain that in the next decade we will see many more discussions of the physical remains of Jewish life in Iberia – including synagogues – added to the information from inquisitorial documents, rabbinic *responsa* and a variety of other documentary sources which open a window – so to speak – onto the medieval synagogue.

Types of Synagogues

In Spain and Italy there were synagogues of many sizes and plan types. There is no single synagogue form, and historians have been tempted to make overly sweeping generalizations based on too few examples – so that each new discovery threatens to overwhelm the established paradigm. Conversely, by defining the appearance of synagogues based on relatively little physical evidence but through oft-cited Talmudic and rabbinic pronouncements on ideal synagogue forms, historians have probably biased the search for synagogues – perhaps leading to the overlooking of many examples by archaeologists pre-disposed to identify only known types.

Many medieval synagogues were richly decorated, but many probably were not. There were community synagogues, private synagogues, and synagogues organized by charitable societies. We can generalize that the locations of synagogues were well known, but the entrances to most synagogues were often protected by exterior courtyards, rather than face di-

rectly onto the public street. Synagogues were usually imbedded into the physical as well as the social fabric of their surrounding (Jewish) communities, and prayer halls were often part of larger complexes which included spaces for other religious and communal functions.

While the synagogue was not a distinct architectural type, it was a functional one, and the architectural and liturgical adaptations needed to produce and protect the medieval synagogue were influential in subsequent centuries. Many of our modern notions of what synagogues look like, how they function, and what they signify were already present in the Middle Ages.

Almost thirty years ago David Cassuto pointed out that most early medieval – and many later medieval – synagogues would not have been purpose-built, architecturally distinguishable buildings because community size would not warrant this, or afford it.[15] A single room in any building would serve for prayer. Bernard Blumenkranz had suggested that forty adult males in a community might be sufficient to create a synagogue.[16] Cassuto posits that two hundred males would be needed to actually erect a new one. Restrictive laws about repairing and building synagogues – which as Yom-Tov Assis has demonstrated for Spain seem to have been erratically observed – still would have limited the building of architecturally distinctive synagogue buildings without a strong sense of political and economic security. For private synagogues which might have been "vanity" projects as much as pious works, these numbers might not apply.

If not for the nineteenth-century discovery of the Cairo *genizah* our information of medieval Jewish life in North Africa – as rich as we now know it to have been – would be almost unknown. On the other hand, extensive documentary research in recent decades in Spain and Italy, as well as new archaeological excavations, has increased our knowledge of Jewish settlement and synagogue building in those countries tremendously.

There is sufficient documentary information, such as that compiled by Shlomo Simonsohn and Toaff[17] in Italy and Assis and others in Spain to allow us to contemplate "Jewish Space," (including the appearance and use of synagogues) within the medieval Mediterranean city in some areas more than others. Topographical studies by local historians have begun to identify the locations of Jewish neighborhoods in Italian, Spanish, and some southern French towns. There has been increasing work, too, identifying Jewish sites along the Eastern Adriatic and in the Balkans. Though in many places where there has been nearly continuous Jewish occupation older synagogues have been destroyed and replaced. This is especially the case in the Romaniote centers of Greece.[18]

Spanish Synagogues

The richest material for medieval synagogues comes from Spain, but since Prof. Narkiss has already mentioned some of these issues, I will only make a few points and there is little I can add to the description of Spanish synagogues published in 1992 by Assis, which more than any previous work draws upon extensive documentary information. Subsequent discoveries mostly amplify his observations rather than change any conclusions. Still, archaeology and detailed building studies will eventually provide more detail about individual synagogue buildings, including important information about size and shape, constituent parts, construction, decoration, and possibly information about ceremonial and liturgical arrangements including more about the location of courtyards, doorways, and the placement of the *aron ha-kodesh* (or *heikhal*) and the *tevah*. We may also learn more specific information about the inclusion of women – or lack thereof – in the synagogue. From documents we already learn something of women's role, which is described below.

The surviving synagogues of Spain, all of which were subsequently reused and substantially remodeled, retain significant remains of much decoration. Many Spanish synagogues were richly decorated with polychrome stucco, including various types of dedicatory and inspirational inscriptions, floral depictions, and abstract designs. The most elaborate is found in the private Samuel Ha-Levi Synagogue in Toledo, but there are also large amounts of decorative stucco work still *in situ* in the small Isaac Menab Synagogue in Córdoba, the former Great Synagogue of Toledo, the former Great Synagogue of Segovia (later transformed in the Church of Corpus Christi), as well as excavated fragments from the synagogue of Cuenca which was transformed into the Church of Santa Maria de Gracia, and then demolished in 1912.[19]

The Spanish synagogues, and probably the South Italian ones, too, no matter what their size, appear to have had impressive freestanding readers' platforms. None of these survive, but we have representations in fourteenth-century manuscript illuminations.[20] As already described for Palermo, these were probably mostly made of wood. Abraham ibn Daoud (ca. 1110 to ca. 1180) writes in his chronicle *Sefer ha-Kabbalah* (Book of Tradition) of a wooden one that was old and broken, and collapsed.[21] The inscription of the Ha-Levi Synagogue mentions the "wooden tower."[22] But in the Cairo *genizah* is the mention of a masonry platform or *anbol*.[23] The Barcelona Haggadah shows what appears to be a metal canopy. We have a later example of this same design in the Ibn Danan Synagogue in Fez, Morocco.

Maimonides called for the platform to be centrally located, but Joseph Caro later advised it to be placed opposite the *heikhal* on the west wall. In Spain we have examples of both arrangements, and until more informa-

tion is available, I believe it is best to accept the physical evidence, and the fact that both methods were probably in use at the same time. Their acceptance might have been the result in preference for certain rabbinic authorities, but it might just as well have been influenced – like so many aspects of synagogue design – by local customs and tastes, sites restrictions and other practical architectural requirements, patron or artisan preference, or the influence from Muslim or Christian sources. Mosques and churches had their own types of pulpits for reading and preaching and it is likely that there was a crosspollination of design between these and the synagogue *tevah* or *bimah*.

Synagogues also had built-in cabinets for the Torah scrolls, and as Prof. Narkiss demonstrated in an important 1992 article, they are likely to have had small distinct rooms – often hidden – off the east wall of the synagogue – and used as a closed room to store multiple Torah scrolls. This type of room recalls a medieval church treasury, where relics and liturgical objects were stored in close proximity to the altar. Archaeology has revealed such a space at the Ha-Levi Synagogue, and one can see this type of *heikhal* at Córdoba, too, and probably at the Toledo Great Synagogue.

Women in the Synagogue

Great interest is now being shown in the historic role of women in Judaism and in the organization of Jewish life, and therefore in their role in the synagogue. We should not over-emphasize women's participation, but it is clear from many sources that women were included in the synagogue community, albeit not as full participants.

A thirteenth-century Hebrew source from Spain refers to a space for women to pray as the *bet ha-knesset shel ha-nashim* (women's synagogue), and this does not seem to be a separate synagogue. It reports that "he sold two seats that he possessed in the synagogue ... the second of which was situated in the synagogue of the women."[24]

In Barcelona, a synagogue known as the Sinagoga Menor (minor or lesser synagogue) was also called the Scola de les Dones, probably, according to Assis, because it had a place for women while others synagogues did not.[25] In one of the *responsa* of R. Yehudah ben ha-Rosh (R. Asher ben Yehiel), who lived in Toledo in the fourteenth century, there is a detailed description of a project to add a room for women (*ezrat nashim*) to a synagogue. This was a private initiative by a neighbor who wanted to build a room for women that would open to the synagogue. He planned its access through his house, so the question arose whether a private individual should be in a position to control a women's access to the synagogue space reserved for women. If the door were erected outside his house, the whole project would receive the blessing of the community and R. Yehudah.[26]

Several known synagogues, such as the private Ha-Levi Synagogue in Toledo and the one in Córdoba appear to have reserved gallery space for women. This may be confirmed for the Ha-Levi Synagogue by the passage from Exodus 15:20 which describes Miriam and the women dancing and singing, that is placed near the gallery. If the Church of San Antonio in Híjar was, in fact, a synagogue, it would provide another example of a gallery.

Assis maintains that "in most synagogues there was a room or hall [for women], adjacent to the men's hall, either on one side or at the back of hall." Similar arrangements existed in the Rhineland at Speyer and Worms. Across the Mediterranean, the Cairo *genizah* materials indicate that both the Babylonian and Palestinian synagogues in Fustat (Cairo) had a women's gallery (*bait-al-nisa*) that was reached by a stairway opening onto a side street. The arrangement remains the norm in many Orthodox synagogues to the present day.

Synagogues in Medieval Italy

The situation in Italy is somewhat different than in Spain, and we have fewer surviving buildings.

Frequent references to Jews can still be found in toponyms throughout Southern Italy and Sicily from where Jews were expelled by the late fifteenth century, particularly in rural areas, such as those in Calabria documented by Sonia Vivacqua and others.[27] In Southern Italy, through the mid-thirteenth century, the Jewish population was large and established, dating back to antiquity. When Jews were expelled from Sicily in 1492, it is estimated at thirty five thousand people left, or approximately five percent of the population of the island, where Jews had lived for centuries in at least fifty localities. We can assume synagogues in most of these places. In Central and Northern Italy there are fewer Jewish place names, and those tend to be from the era of ghettoes that began in the sixteenth century.

Rome, in this as in so many other ways, is exceptional. The Via Iudea existed and was so-named before the institution of the ghetto in 1555. The Ponte Quattro Capi was also commonly known as the Ponte Judaeorum from at least the twelfth century.

Recent research has put the places of Jewish settlements in Central and Northern Italy in the hundreds between the thirteenth and the mid-sixteenth century.[28] According to Michele Luzzati, the population of these communities numbered between fifteen and twenty thousand Jews, or approximately 0.2 % of the population as a whole.[29] Except in Rome, Jewish populations were fairly small, often no more than one or two banking families and their retainers. A "family" might easily consist of more than a dozen members, including blood relatives, servants and employees.

Thus, a community of two or more families might provide the needed *minyan* (quorum) of adult males required for the most important religious services, and the establishment of a synagogue. But the synagogues would likely have been only designated rooms in houses.

In the South it seems safe to assume that synagogues, built by larger and more established Jewish communities could be notable works of architecture, and were prominently sited – like Palermo – at least within predominately Jewish neighborhoods. A few other examples survive. There are two fine masonry synagogues in the Apulian port city of Trani. One of them, the Scolanova Synagogue is an open hall, approximately 15 by 6.4 m, with an approximately 11 m-barrel vault and what may have been a slightly raised women's gallery at the western end. This building has recently been reestablished as a synagogue. It is constructed of cut stone blocks laid in irregular rows in the local Norman Romanesque style, which recalls in some respects the excavated Jewish building in Norman Rouen.[30] But according to David Cassuto, the Scolanova Synagogue had a Gothic *heikhal* or ark area on the eastern end preceded by seven steps. The *heikhal* had a central column that formed two separate arched openings.

The other surviving Trani Synagogue is now the Church of Sant'Anna. Its almost square plan with hemispherical dome is closer to Eastern Mediterranean architectural models, either Byzantine or Muslim. The main hall is approximately 11.6 by 12.2 m, and was enclosed by four huge arches that supported an almost 8 m-high dome. According to Cassuto, there was a semicircular niche covered by a half-dome in the west wall that may have held the *tevah* and the reader's desk. The *heikhal* may have stood at the east end under the round window. If Cassuto's interpretation of the design of Sant'Anna is correct, it reveals an early bipolar synagogue – next seen at the small synagogue of Córdoba (Spain).

I have already mentioned the synagogue of Palermo – which was forced to close like all Jewish institutions when the Jews were expelled from the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. There was also surely a significant synagogue in Syracuse near the impressive *mikveh*, recently discovered. I believe that, similar to what is happening in Spain and Portugal, close examination of surviving buildings in the towns of Southern Italy and Sicily will in time reveal more former synagogues.

In Rome, there is documentary evidence of many synagogues beginning in the eleventh century, but a small building in the Trastevere neighborhood is the only surviving structure likely to have been a synagogue before the institution of the ghetto in 1555. This structure is similar in size and form to Roman houses of the twelfth and thirteenth century.

Similarly, synagogues in Central and Northern Italy outside of Rome were mostly in private houses, which either continued to serve as residences, or were in a few cases converted entirely to worship and community spaces within. The exteriors of these buildings were unchanged and probably undistinguishable from neighboring houses. This is a tradition that continued wherever Jewish communities were small, and not deeply rooted. Outside of Italy we can mention such house-synagogues in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and Pfaffenhoffen, France (Alsace, 1791).[31]

Italian synagogues were most often located within the house of the wealthiest Jew in the community, or in another house purchased by an individual Jew, and established for community use. These houses were typical of Italy's medieval urban centers, and there is no formal distinction between a house used by a Christian and one used by a Jew. The same was certainly true for many Spanish synagogues – since houses were sometimes deeded as gifts. Toaff has documented in detail the complicated history of the synagogue of Perugia in Umbria, in existence from the mid-fifteenth century until the Jews were expelled from that city in 1570. The synagogue (or *scola*) was located in the fine house (*palazzo*) in the district of Porta Sant'Angelo, for which the Jews paid a rent of 7 florins a year to a local nobleman. In 1448, the community began to also rent an adjacent building for 7 florins a year. Then, both buildings were purchased by the two wealthy Jewish brothers, Aleuccio and Angelo di Guglielmo, for 200 florins, and the Jewish community was allowed to continue use of part of the buildings as a synagogue, but ownership remained with the brothers who restored and enlarged the houses as their own residence.

In nearby Assisi, the community rented a house for a synagogue until the mid-fifteenth century when it appears Jews were given a building for synagogue use by the commune. This was probably located near the Piazza del Comune (*versus plateam*), near the present Chiesa Nuova, behind the Palazzo dei Priori, on the site of the so-called birthplace of San Francesco.[32] We have similar, but less detailed, documentation for other towns in Central Italy.

An example of such a house is probably illustrated in a small miniature from a fifteenth century Hebrew manuscript in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma.[33] We see the house of a wealthy Jew. The ground floor is articulated with a wide high arch, typical of the ground floor shops and workspaces of such houses. Two small windows surmount this arch, probably indicating a mezzanine level connected to the shop. Above is the *piano nobile* illuminated by three Gothic windows, the center one a *bifora*. One can imagine a prayer room possibly set up behind these windows. Above, two more small windows probably indicate another story.

Elsewhere, such as in Sermoneta[34] and Campagnolo in Lazio certain houses have been traditionally identified as synagogues, but without authentification.[35] The fine stone townhouse in Sermoneta would have allowed worshipers to meet on the *piano nobile*, in a large well-lit room on the first story (above ground level) – a space traditionally reserved as a reception room or bedroom for the master of the house. This building was obviously built as a private residence but it is entirely possible that part of it was once used by the town's medieval Jewish community as a synagogue.

An idea of what the interior arrangement of an Italian house-synagogue space might have looked like can be gleaned from a late fifteenth-century Italian manuscript illustration from Emilia – the illustration shows an open room with a tall wooden ark set against one wall and a lower reader's table set before it. To either side of the room are a series of chests or desks at which the worshippers sit, facing the center of the room. A prayer book (*siddur*) and a candle burning in a candlestick are placed on each desk. This is a night service – or perhaps early morning. It is dark outside the four Romanesque style double-light windows. The room is elegant, with a large decorated arch supported on Corinthian columns supporting a wooden coffered ceiling and allowing the room to be larger than ordinary. Each ceiling coffer is decorated with a painted star. The floor is made of red ceramic tile.[36] Rooms like this can still be found in Early Renaissance *palazzi* throughout Italy.

In conclusion, we note the diversity of synagogue types. They reflect the varied circumstances of Jews. Tradition, liturgical needs and political circumstances were all deciding factors. This dependency continues today, even though – or especially because – the architectural vocabulary available to synagogue designers is richer and more varied. We can expect that new research in the archives and in the ground will produce in the coming years even more varieties of medieval synagogues, and ever more detail about those buildings we know.

[1] This paper is part of a larger study of medieval synagogues and Jewish spaces through the sixteenth century, with a special focus on Italy, when the first ghettoes were created in Venice (1516), Rome (1555), Florence (1571), and elsewhere. I am grateful to the organizers of the Braunschweig conference for the opportunity to present this work.

[2] Mark D. Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, 2004), p. 209.

[3] Accounts of such explorations are many. Both specifics and the general tastes of exploration and discovery since the 1980s can be found in three books by Ruth Ellen Gruber: *Upon the Doorposts of Thy House: Jewish Life in East-Central Europe, Yesterday and Today* (New York, 1994); *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley, 2001); and *Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC, 2007). See also Rivka and Ben-Zion Dorfman, *Synagogues without Jews: and the communities that built them* (Philadelphia, 2000).

[4] Híjar, with its Jewish quarter, has been declared a site of cultural interest by the Government of Aragon, and the Church of San Antonio is widely believed to have been a synagogue. No study of the building has been published and no certain confirmation of its former Jewish use. I have been told that examination of floor area and substructures indicate the former presence of a central structure. If so, this could have been a *bimah*.

[5] Letter of Obadiah da Bertinoro (1487–90) translated in *Miscellany of Hebrew Literature* (London, 1872), and reproduced in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages,* ed. Elkan Nathan Adler (London, 1930 and New York, 1987).

[6] On the fate of the court favorite Samuel Ha-Levi and his private synagogue see Esther Goldman, "Samuel Halevi Abulafia's Synagogue (El Tránsito) in Toledo," *Jewish Art* 18 (1992), pp. 58–69.

[7] For more than a half century the basic secondary sources about medieval synagogues have been Richard Krautheimer, *Mittelalterliche Synagogen* (Berlin, 1927); and Francisco Cantera Burgos, *Sinagogas españolas* (Madrid, 1984). See also Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe* (Cambridge, 1985), passim. More recently, scores of individual articles have appeared expanding and correcting these compilations.

[8] See especially the recent update on Krautheimer by Simon Paulus, *Die Architektur der Synagoge im Mittelalter: Überlieferung und Bestand* (Petersberg, 2007).

[9] The largest selection of medieval manuscript illustrations representing synagogues is in T. and M. Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages: Illuminated Hebrew Manuscripts of the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries* (Secaucus, 1982). Many illustrations are now also available in various catalogues of *Sephardi* culture, such as *Aragon Sepharad,* 2 vols. (Zaragoza, 2004). The entire book is available online in PDF form at:
http://www.dpz.es/turismo/monograficos/aragon-sefarad/AragonSefarad-I.asp; and Isidro G. Bango, *Remembering Sepharad: Jewish Culture in Medieval Spain* (Madrid, 2003).

[10] For a review of recent archaeological finds regarding synagogues see Samuel D. Gruber, "Archaeological Remains of Ashkenazic Jewry in Europe: A New Source of Pride and History," in *What Athens has to do with Jerusalem: Essays on classical, Jewish, and Early Christian Art and Archaeology in Honor of Gideon Foerster,* ed. Leonard Rutgers (Paris-Louvain, 2002), pp. 267–301.

[11] Ariel Toaff, *The Jews in Umbria,* 3 vols. (Leiden, 1993–94); and *Love, Work & Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria,* translated by Judith Landry (London, 1998); and Yom-Tov Assis, "Synagogues in Medieval Spain," *Jewish Art* 18 (1992), pp. 7–29.

[12] See http://www.project-yesod.org/

[13] On recent excavation see H. E. Brekle, *Das Regensburger Ghetto* (Regensburg, 1997); and S. Codreanu-Windauer, "Wiederentdeckung der Synagoge in Regensburg," *Denkmalpflege Informationen,* ed. Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege B 103, pp. 4–6; S. Codreanu-Windauer and S. Ebeling, "Die mittelalterliche Synagoge Regensburgs," in *Monumental: Festschrift für Michael Petzet,* eds. S. Böning-Weis, K. Hemmeter, and Y. Langenstein (Munich, 1998), pp. 449–64; and S. Codreanu-Windauer,"The Medieval Jewish Quarter of Regensburg and Its Synagogue: Archaeological Research 1995–1997," in *Case Studies in Archaeology and World Religion: The Proceedings of the Cambridge Conference,* ed. T. Insoll (Oxford, 1999), pp. 139–52.

[14] See for example Geoffrey David Goldstein, "Spain: Barcelona's Great Synagogue Set for Restoration," *Jewish Heritage Report* III, no. 1–2 (summer 2000), p. 12. For a fuller look at recent archaeological discoveries at medieval Spanish synagogues see Ana Maria López Álvarez and T. Álvarez Delgado, "La galería de las mujeres de la sinagoga de El Tránsito: nuevos hallazgos," *Sefarad* 47 (1987), pp. 301–14; Santiago Palomera Plaza, Ana Maria Lopez Alvarez, and Yasmina Alvarez Delgado, "Excavation around the Samuel Halevi Synagogue (del Tránsito) in Toledo," *Jewish Art* 18 (1992), pp. 48–57; and Miguel Beltrán Lloris and Juan Ángel Paz Peralta, "Estado actual de la arqueología judia en Aragon. Balance y perspectives de futuro," in *Aragon Sepharad,* vol. 1 (Zaragoza, 2004), pp. 341–54.

[15] David Cassuto, "Edifici rituali degli ebrei nell'alto medioevo," in *Gli Ebrei nell'Alto Medioevo, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medievo, 30 marzo–5 aprile 1978* (Spoleto, 1980), pp. 1020–21.

[16] Bernard Blumenkranz, *Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental de 430 à 1096* (Paris, 1960), pp. 38–39. See also D. Jancu-Agou, "Topographie des quartiers juifs en Provence médiévale," *Revue des Études Juives* CXXXIII, pp. 105–9.

[17] Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Jews in Sicily,* 7 vols. (Leiden, 1997–2005). See especially vol. 1 for the period 383–1300. For Toaff see above, note 11.

[18] See Nicholas Stavroulakis, *Jewish Sites and Synagogues of Greece* (Athens, 1992).

[19] The stucco fragments are in the collection of the Archivo Diocesano de Cuenca. For illustrations see Bango, *Remembering Sepharad,* p. 115.

[20] These include pages with scenes of synagogues from *Haggadot* including the following:
Barcelona Haggadah, British Library Ms. 14761; *Sister Haggadah,* British Library Ms. Or. 1404,

the *Sarajevo Haggadah*, Bosnian National Museum; and the *Sephardi Siddur* in Bodleian Library, Oxford (Ms. Opp. Add. 8 14, fol. 242r).

[21] See Gerson D. Cohen, *A critical edition with a translation and notes of the book of tradition (Sefer ha-qabbalah) by Abraham Ibn Daud* (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 71.

[22] The inscription on the ark wall reads in part:
And the house the Samuel built
And the wooden tower for the reading of the written law
And the scrolls of the Law and the crowns thereto
And its lavers and lamps for lighting
And its windows like the windows of Ariel
And its courts for them that cherish the perfect law
And seats, too, for all who sit in the shade of God
So that those who saw it almost said, "This semblance
Is as the semblance of the work which Bezalel wrought".
Go now, ye peoples, and come into my gates
And seek the Lord, for it is a house of God even in Bethel.
(translation by Cecil Roth, quoted in Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 34.

[23] S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgment in One Volume* (Berkeley, 1999), pp. 147–48.

[24] Adret VI, 7, quoted by Assis, "Synagogues in Medieval Spain," p. 18.

[25] Cantera, *Sinagogas españolas*, p. 171; and ibid.

[26] *Yehuda*, 68, cited in Assis, "Synagogues in Medieval Spain,"pp. 17–18.

[27] See Sonia Vivaqua, "Gli ebrei in Calabria," in *Architettura Judaica in Italia: ebraismo, sito, memoria dei luoghi* (Palermo, 1994), pp. 257–68. Throughout this important volume there are other references to toponyms that probably refer to Jews.

[28] Michele Luzzati, "Northern and Central Italy: Assessment of Research and Further Prospects," in *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries), Proceedings of the International Symposium held at Speyer, 20–25 October 2002,* ed. C. Cluse, (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 191–200.

[29] Luzzati distinguishes between Jewish settlement, where at least one Jewish family permanently settled for a certain period of a number of years, and Jewish presence, where Jews are recorded as owning property.

[30] On Rouen see Norman Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy: A Social and Intellectuel History* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 146–69.

[31] On Dubrovnik see Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe*, pp. 167–69; on Pfaffenhoffen see Samuel D. Gruber, *Preservation Priorities: Endangered Historic Jewish Sites* (New York, 1996), p. 8.

[32] Toaff, *Jews of Assisi*, p. 81.

[33] Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms. Oarm. 3273-De Rossi 134, fol. 1v, reproduced in Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, fig. 121.

[34] Located at 15 via Marconi. See F. Tetro, "Gli ebrei a Sermoneta XIII–XIV sec.," *Economia Pontina* 4 (1977), pp. 9–26; and N. Pavoncello, "Le comunità ebraiche laziali prima del bando di Pio V," *Lunario Romano* 9 (1980), p. 49.

[35] Many Jewish communities were located within the general vicinity of Rome. Though we have considerable documentary evidence of their settlement, little physical evidence survives. Among the various other towns in which Jews are known to have settled are Civitavecchia, Ariccia, Genzano, Velletri, Frascati, Grottaferrata, Marino, Segni, Palestrina, Genazzano, Tivoli, Campagnolo, Castelnuovo di Porto, and Sacrofano.

[36] The scene is in a *mahzor* in the G. Weill Collection, Jerusalem, and is illustrated in Metzger, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages,* fig. 96.